

J.L.KENWORTHY



U. S. NAVAL AMMUNITION DEPOT  
OAHU, HAWAII, U.S.A.

West Loch,  
December 16,

From: Commander Jesse L. KENWORTHY, Jr., U.S. Navy  
To : Captain R.D. BODE, U.S. Navy  
Subject: Surprise Enemy Attack and Sinking of  
U.S.S. OKLAHOMA

1. On Sunday December 7, 1941 the U.S.S. OKLAHOMA was moored outboard of the U.S.S. MARYLAND, starboard side to, at Berth F-5, Pearl Harbor, T.H. At approximately 0757 the word was passed to man the anti-aircraft battery and the sound of gun fire was heard. The word was again passed that this was a real attack and for all unengaged personnel to seek cover. I had started down the starboard ladder in the Wardroom country to go to my office when the first alarm came and immediately ran up the ladder to the starboard side of the upper deck to go to the Conning tower after calling for the crew to go to battle stations. As I reached the upper deck, I felt a heavy shock and heard a loud explosion and the ship immediately began to list to port.

2. Oil and water descended on deck and by the time I had reached the boat deck, the shock of two more explosions on the port side was felt. In the meanwhile, general quarters had sounded and the crew had gone to battle stations and started "Zed" closures.

3. As I attempted to get to the Conning tower over the decks slippery with oil and water, I felt the shock of another very heavy explosion on the port side. By this time the ship was listing from 25° to 35° degrees and was continuing to list further. It was now obvious that the ship was going to continue to roll over and I climbed over the boat deck toward the starboard side. Men were beginning to come up from below through hatches and gun ports and from them it was learned that the ship was filling with water in many spaces below.

4. As I reached the starboard side, I met Lieutenant Commander HOBBY, the First Lieutenant, and with him concluded that the ship was fast becoming untenable and that an effort should be made to save as many men as possible. The word was passed for all hands to abandon ship and the men were directed to leave over the starboard side and to walk and climb over the ship's side and onto the bottom as it rolled over. At about this time another heavy explosion was felt on the port side and the ship began to roll over rapidly. The men went over the starboard side, climbing over the side and bottom and many went into the water to swim to the MARYLAND.

5. After it became impossible to remain on the starboard side longer, I walked up the ship's side over the blister ledge and up over the bottom. The ship settled with the star-



and the starboard propeller shaft clear. Two motor launches were caught on the keel and propeller shaft aft. One of these was gotten off and sent after men in the water. Life jackets were removed from these launches and thrown to men who were still in the water waiting to be picked up by boats that had now come to the rescue. After all men were clear of the hull, I went into a boat and assisted in taking men from the water. When all men in sight had been taken from the water, we proceeded to the boat shed on Ford Island between the CALIFORNIA and MARYLAND and sent wounded and those suffering from immersion via trucks to the dispensary. Boats at the boat landing were despatched to pick up personnel from the CALIFORNIA and to search the along line of ships. Men arriving uninjured at the boat shed were sent to assist in putting out the oil and gasoline fires that had started around the fuel dock and near the boat sheds.

6. I then proceeded along Ford Island toward the MARYLAND, where I met Captain BODE and other OKLAHOMA officers and with them proceeded to the Naval Air Station administration building from where we later went to the Naval Ammunition Depot at West Loch.

7. Throughout the short period of the attack preceding the capsizing of the OKLAHOMA, the ship was subjected to torpedo fire from a large number of enemy planes approaching from the direction of Merry Point. The ship was further subjected to strafing attacks, and two flights of six each high altitude bombers approaching from the direction of the harbor entrance, dropped their bombs from around 10 to 12,000 feet, which fell astern and clear of the overturned OKLAHOMA. The exact number of torpedoes that struck the ship is uncertain, but has been variously estimated from five to seven at points from about frame 50 to frame 115 port. No bombs are known to have struck on board for a certainty.

8. While all of the gun crews were at stations immediately after the first alarm, and the ready ammunition boxes were being opened, fire was not taken up by the guns of the 3"/50 and 5"/25 anti-aircraft batteries as the ship listed so rapidly that the guns could not be effectively serviced. Oil and water on the decks made it additionally difficult for men to stay on their feet. Fire was taken up by the security watch on the 30 caliber machine gun on the port side of the superstructure deck but this gun was almost immediately placed out of service by the first torpedo hit forward.

9. The conduct of the crew was excellent throughout. There was no evidence of panic and the men leaving the ship to go into the water were eager to get aboard the MARYLAND and to assist in the action there on the 5"/25 A.A. guns and pom-poms. A large number of OKLAHOMA men assisted both with the service of these guns and with the ammunition supply until ordered to Ford Island.

/s/ J. L. KENWORTHY, JR.